

SUZANNE FIELDS

# Fallout from the Israeli spy case

Jonathan Jay Pollard wanted to be a big *makher* — that's a Yiddish expression for big-time operator.

If he is guilty as charged, he was a big mouth, an egomaniacal braggart, a pathological liar, a blowhard, a man who went to great lengths to get attention, often boasting of sexual and political exploits that may or may not have been true, a man who would sell out his country to its friends.

With friends like that, the Jews don't need enemies.

His case helps put to rest the notion that agents who act out of idealism rather than greed (Mr. Pollard is said to be an ardent Zionist) are romantic in their treachery. Mr. Pollard is a suspect without a country, a man for whom both sides now have contempt. His could be a cold cell.

Why would the savvy Israelis, who are credited in fact and legend with one of the most sophisticated intelligence operations in the world, hire such a man to spy for them against their best friend among nations? You might think that if the Israelis thought it necessary to spy on a

friend, they would be careful about whom they hired to do it. (For that matter, how did such a motormouth get a top-security clearance in the U.S. Navy?)

If Shimon Peres follows through on his promise "that those responsible will be brought to account," and it looks as if he will, then we should find out what was stolen, when it was stolen, for whom, and by whom. Mr. Pollard's mother said that if her son did it, she was "sure he had good reasons." If the Peres government comes through, we won't have to take mama's word for it.

Otherwise, we'd be left to believe that brilliant though Jonathan Jay Pollard may have been as an undergraduate at Stanford University, when, according to the charges against him, he entered the larger world of politics and international double-dealing, he and his accused accomplices were incredibly stupid.

Saul Bellow's uncle, who did not suffer intellectual fools gladly, would understand the likes of Mr. Pollard. The old man listened patiently and respectfully to the young folks showing off their newly bought book-learning, to their talk of theses and anti-theses, as though they held the keys to the political universe. Finally, when he could take no more, he shook the old gray head he had spent his life filling with common-sensical wisdom and observed of the young know-it-alls: "Smart, smart, but so dumb!"

Certain kinds of Jewish smarts, the uncle knew, can be symptoms of brain disease.

"Jewish dumb smartness," says Milton Himmelfarb in *Commentary* magazine, "is inveterate." He's talking about the Jews in America who are among the most-edu-

cated and civic-minded people in this country, but who sometimes show the oddest kind of understanding of their own interests.

He notes that in 1984 three in five Jewish voters agreed that "U.S. military spending should be cut," while at the same time agreeing with the proposition that "to be a reliable military supplier of Israel, the United States should maintain a strong military capacity."

Some Jews are exceedingly wary of finding ways of working with the Christian conservatives in this country, even though the Christian conservatives are among the most reliable of Israel's American friends. (Anti-Semitism, once a phenomenon on the right is usually found today on the left). Jews are willing to forgive Jesse Jackson, the born-again

Baptist preacher from Chicago, for wrapping his arms around Yasser Arafat, but they won't trust friendly Christians who want to restore prayer in the school.

"Will the American Friends Service Committee, will the bureaucracies of the liberal churches rush in to befriend Israel if the Christian Right stops being friendly?" Milton Himmelfarb asks. His conclusion: "Jews tell themselves that they can eat their cake and have it."

American Jews know that the Pollard case can be expected to revive the ancient suspicions of divided loyalties by those who wish us ill. Is there an American Jew who loves Israel who has not been asked where his first loyalties lie?

This is a question that has not been asked only of Jews. Americans

of Japanese descent were locked up 40 years ago for no reason other than that America was at war with their "mother country." German-Americans suffered in the months before American entry into World War I, and again in the early months of World War II, even though thousands of them went off to fight first the Kaiser and then *Der Fuhrer*.

Jews have been an intimate part of America from its birth, long before the waves of immigration transformed our continent, when the Israeli state was little more than a cherished Old Testament prophecy. More than a hundred Jews fought with the patriots in the American Revolution. A Jew died with the Texans defending the Alamo. Judah P. Benjamin of Louisiana

resigned his seat in the U.S. Senate to take three different portfolios in the Confederate Cabinet, finally becoming a Jewish-American secretary of state a century before Henry Kissinger did it. Six Jews won the Medal of Honor for bravery in the Civil War. Jewish cowboys rode up San Juan Hill with Theodore Roosevelt. Emma Lazarus gave the voice to Miss Liberty's invitation to the "huddled masses yearning to breathe free." Irving Berlin's "God Bless America" became a hymn for the heyday of the old-time American religion.

If Jonathan Jay Pollard is convicted, the episode would be a blot on the pages Jews have written of their country's history, a stain that the Israeli government has the power to remove.

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